

June 2010

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Gator Times



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THE NAVY'S "TOP GATOR"
USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

Gator Times



30 years
LHA 4

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On The Cover:
USS Nassau (LHA 4) Sailors participate in a COMREL, Steel Beach Picnic, Hair Show, and an Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration.
Photos by USS Nassau Public Affairs



GatorTimes

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Gator Times is a product of the USS Nassau (LHA 4) Public Affairs Office. The editorial content of this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the official views of the command or

Greetings Shipmates, Families and Friends,

Nassau has two months left in her 2010 deployment and they promise to be the most enjoyable yet.

Soon we will head south towards our first port visit in the Seychelles. In order to get there Nassau must cross the Equator, which offers our Sailors and Marines the opportunity to participate in a true crossing the line ceremony. For all our Wogs this is a time-honored tradition thousands of years old and a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

An archipelago of 115 islands northeast of Madagascar, the Seychelles are known for white sandy beaches and lush hills. The islands are a popular vacation destination and will offer the crew a chance to get some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

Nassau will sail north back to its operating area after Seychelles. July will be highlighted by celebrating Independence Day aboard the ship with our special guests the "Cooks from the Valley." This group of volunteers from Bakersfield, Calif., travels at their own expense to show their appreciation for the Armed Forces by grilling gourmet steaks for deployed service members. They've been known to serve 7,000 steaks in a single visit.

All this activity is a welcome change of pace from our daily routine over the last few months. Once back

Captain's Call

Capt. Ronald Reis
Commanding Officer
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



on station we need to remain focused on the tasks at hand and continue to do things safely. Make a concrete effort to stay hydrated and continue to get adequate rest. Also, always look out for your Shipmate!

Once our relief arrives around mid-July we will be homeward bound. Nassau plans to stop in the Mediterranean for one last port visit before steaming to North Carolina to drop off the Marines and pick up our Tigers. I know all the families are looking forward to our return. Until next time stay hydrated and motivated!

CMC Corner



Shipmates, Nassau Families and Friends,

We have less than 60 days left on deployment and everyone aboard Nassau is looking forward to our homecoming.

For now there's a lot of excitement about the first port visit of the deployment to the Seychelles. It's a long-awaited and well-deserved break every Sailor and Marine aboard has earned. It will be a great opportunity to relax, get away from the ship and recharge their batteries.

Along with the port visit, our Sailor and Marines are also getting the opportunity to cross the equator and participate in a time-honored tradition known as the Crossing the Line Ceremony.

It is long-standing naval tradition to initiate slimy pollywogs (those who have never crossed the Equator) into the Kingdom of Neptune, the legendary god of the

seas, upon their first crossing. Upon successfully completing the ceremony, they become Trusy Shellbacks. The ceremony is a always fun time for all.

There's also been a lot of talk about our upcoming Tiger Cruise. Hopefully many of Nassau's Sailors and Marines can take advantage of the opportunity to bring a family member or friend aboard. It's a chance to experience how we live aboard ship and see firsthand what we do for a living. Spouses are not authorized and participants must be in good health. I look forward to meeting all our Tigers when they come aboard.

I'd like to thank everyone on the homefront to all the support you've given our Sailors and Marines the past five months. Please continue showing that support and we will be home before you know it.

Until next time, take care and God bless.

Nassau Sailors Aid Djibouti Wildlife

Story & photos by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson
USS Nassau Public Affairs



USS Nassau (LHA 4) Sailors Quartermaster 3rd Class (SW) Demetrius Washington, from Quitman, Ga., and Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW/AW) Deville Warner, from Louisville, Ky., rake some loose mesquite branches during a community relations project on the animal refuge. The trees, originally brought to Africa from South America, cut off the local vegetation's water supply and had to be cut down.

Ten Sailors from USS Nassau (LHA 4) helped to improve animal welfare at Decan Animal Refuge in Djibouti.

The Community Relations (COMREL) group, comprised of nine enlisted Sailors and one officer, departed Nassau on May 12 to Camp Lemonnier, a Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA) base.

Once the group arrived on base to a blistering 120 degrees Fahrenheit, they were quickly briefed and escorted to their air conditioned rooms.

Nassau's Command Chaplain Cmdr. William Stallard, and the officer in charge of the COMREL group, said that he personally asked for the animal refuge project.

"I contacted the CJTF HOA's chaplain office and they gave me a list of COMRELs in the Djibouti area," said Stallard, from Danville, Ky. "This one especially caught my attention because I believe the Sailors would enjoy seeing some African wild life and it also gave them a chance to get off the ship for a few days and relax."

Even though the animal refuge was a quick 10 minute

ride from the base, the group saw a police academy on an oasis in the desert, camels, hyenas, and a few villages with polite locals who waved at the bus as it went by.

"Everyone here was very hospitable," said Stallard. "I was amazed at how polite and genuine the Djibout people are. I hope to come back someday because of that."

The group's main objective at the animal refuge was to cut down mesquite trees. The mesquite originates from parts of Central America and is extremely easy to grow because it prefers dry soil in hot climates.

"The problem with mesquite trees doesn't lie in its ability to grow fast or the conditions it can grow in," said COMREL participant Aircrew Survival

Equipmentman Steven Ospina, from Miami. "We found out from the locals that it's known as the 'devil tree' because it takes all the water from the other plants in this region and the animals here can't eat it due to the long thorns that cover the entire tree."

Another one of the COMREL participants, Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW/AW) Deville Warner, from Louisville, Ky., said that even though the group is contributing just a small part to the region by removing the mesquite trees, it will have a good outcome overall.

"It took a lot of hard work in this hot environment," said Warner. "In the end though, I believe our group and future Nassau groups will make it worthwhile for the locals, animals, and other plants."

As the hot African sun set, the group wiped away all the sweat and thorns, stepped onto the bus, and rode away with a sense of accomplishment that will hopefully be instilled in more Nassau COMREL projects to follow.

Nassau Celebrates Asian Pacific Culture

Story & photos by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs



(Top) USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Main Propulsion Assistant Lt. John Stahley, from Los Angeles, kicks Fireman Ra-yan Alarca, from Agana, Guam, during a Kyokushin Kata martial arts demonstration for Nassau's Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration.

(Bottom) Machinist's Mate Fireman Joseph Dizon, from St. Augustine, Fla., performs his Arnis/Escrima martial arts routine for USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration.

USS Nassau (LHA 4) celebrated Asian Pacific Heritage Month in the ship's Hangar Bay June 5.

The event featured a dance and gymnastics routines, a martial arts demonstration and guest speakers who painted a picture of their Asian Pacific backgrounds.

Nassau Main Propulsion Assistant Lt. John Stahley, from Los Angeles, was one of the guest speakers and contributors for the celebration. Stahley performed in the martial arts demonstration and gave a presentation on the different inventions and ideas the Navy uses every day that stem from Asian Pacific ingenuity.

"When I first started setting up for the Asian Pacific celebration, I only knew four people of Asian Pacific American descent on Nassau," Stahley said. "I remember looking through the global e-mail address book and finding 16 more for a total of 20 Asian Pacific volunteers. By the time I sent out my last e-mail and held all of the meetings, I was involving a total of 61 volunteers of Asian Pacific American descent."

Stahley added that he feels the Asian Pacific American community aboard Nassau has formed a long lasting bond he hopes will carry on long after he leaves. The hard work and dedication given to support the event from all of Nassau's departments enabled them to exceed Stahley's expectations.

"We stayed up pretty late the night before the event cooking the food for the crew," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuels) Airman Tanya Cardwell, from Bowling Green, Ky. "It took a lot of work to set everything up, but working together with everyone made it fun."

Cardwell added that she loved working with everyone, especially Stahley because he was always cracking jokes and making the work easier and the time go by quicker.

"The event had something for everyone," said Marine Staff Sgt. Fernando Salinas, from Chandler, Ariz. "I especially liked the martial arts demonstration because I recognized a lot of the moves we learn in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. The entire event was informative and the food was amazing."



(Top) Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) Airman (AW) Yvanray Azucena, from Fort Worth, Texas, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) 3rd Class (AW/SW) Isak Bonyo, from Dallas, and Operations Specialist Seaman (SW/AW) Josephmarlo Guillas, from Las Vegas, perform for the crowd during USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration as the For Your Entertainment Dance Crew.

Photo by MCSN Jonathan Pankau

(Bottom) Amphibious Squadron Eight Commodore Capt. John Bruening tries out a lumpia roll while attending USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration in the ship's Hangar Bay. Bruening sat next to Nassau's Commanding Officer Capt. Ronald Reis, Executive Officer Capt. Samuel Norton, and Command Master Chief CMDCM(AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak.

Photo by MCSN Jonathan Pankau



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) 3rd Class (AW/SW) Isak Bonyo, from Dallas, counters a kick from Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) Airman (AW) Yvanray Azucena, from Fort Worth, Texas, during a self defense martial arts demonstration for USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration in the ship's Hangar Bay.

Photo by MCSN Jonathan Pankau

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN

HAIR SHOW



(Above) Chief Boatswain's Mate (SW/AW) Nicole Sailor, of Devil's Lake, N.D., Personnel Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rhonda Payne, of Waco, Texas, and Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Mary Griffiths of Chesapeake, Va., model their hairstyles for USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Executive Officer Capt. Samuel Norton and Command Master Chief CMDCM(AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak during Nassau's Hair Show.

Photo by MC2 Patrick Gordon

(Right from top to bottom) Ship's Serviceman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Daphne Yowk, from Jackson, Miss., Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class (AW) Latonya Foster, from Saint Albans, W.Va., Master Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Jeffrey Barlow, from Montgomery, Ala., Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Jokina Aziz, from Los Angeles, Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW) Reva Stout, from Gary, Ind., Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Shaquana Fernandez, from Jacksonville, N.C., and Personnel Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rhonda Payne, from Waco, Texas.

Photos by MC2 Patrick Gordon



Nassau Hair Show Cut Above the Rest

Story & photos by MC2 Patrick Gordon
USS Nassau Public Affairs



Ship's Serviceman Seaman Anthony Myers, from Athens, Ga., Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW) Reva Stout, from Gary, Ind., Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Mary Griffiths, from Chesapeake, Va., and Master Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Jeffrey Barlow, from Montgomery, Ala., walk down the runway during the USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hair Show.

USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Second Class/Sergeant Association hosted a hair show on the ship's Mess Deck, highlighting a variety of men's and women's hairstyles.

"We did a fashion show back in February that was a lot of fun, and the crew seemed to enjoy it," said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Tammy Pinkard, of St. Louis. "This time, we wanted to try something different."

Hairstyles featured during the show included Short & Sassy and Popping Ponytail styles for women and High 'n Tight and Spiked Out styles for men.

"Putting this show on has been a lot of fun," said Ship's Serviceman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Daphne Yowk, of Jackson, Miss. "We had about 30 Sailors and Marines participate. I didn't think we'd have so many people be involved, but it's been a great turnout."

While not all the hairstyles were within military regulations, some leeway was given for the show.

"It was really good for morale. The models were allowed to have their hair out of regs, which I think the audience really enjoyed," said Pinkard.

The audience was asked to vote through applause for their favorite hair and makeup styles. Thunderous applause came from the crowd for a number of the models, adding energy to an already fun event.

"The show was really great," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (FMF/SW) Edgar Tucker of Biloxi, Miss. "This was the first hair show I've ever been to, and I thought it was a lot of fun."

The audience members were not the only ones who enjoyed the hair show. The models also had their share of the fun.

"I really enjoyed being a part of this," said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Mary Griffiths of Chesapeake, Va. "I was a little nervous to at first, but once the music started to play I was ready to go."

Yowk said that similar events are planned for the near future and that the whole crew really makes such activities worthwhile.

"It's fun doing something like this because it's different," said Yowk. "Plus it's great to see the crew really come together to put on and support something so fun."

Can Coffee Cure Underway Blues?

Story & photos by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (SW) Haniff Crouch, from Atlanta, pours a packet of sugar into his coffee in the hangar bay of USS Nassau (LHA 4).

"What day is it? I have no idea," said 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit Command Element Staff Sgt. Clinton Schwarz, from Nodine, Minn. "Everyday is Groundhog Day on deployment."

Senior Chief Operations Specialist (SW/AW) Reginald Farr, from Summerville, S.C., said extended periods of time spent at sea can cause the days to run together. This results in a condition Sailors call Groundhog Day, a term Farr has heard many times during his 23 years in the Navy.

Farr said the term stems from the famous movie "Groundhog Day" starring Bill Murray, where, in the movie, Murray's character is trapped in time in a small town that keeps celebrating Groundhog Day over and over again.

"After the movie came out, the term became widely used to describe the sensation some Sailors and Marines experience on deployment," Farr said.

24th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Chaplain Cmdr. Peter St. Martin, from Owatonna, Minn., is familiar with the sensation and believes he has a solution. That is why St. Martin sets up coffee every morning in the hangar bay of USS Nassau (LHA 4). Golden French toast, chocolate raspberry truffle, and Mystic Monk are just a few of the flavors St. Martin brews each morning for Nassau's crew.

"When we're just cutting circles in the water, service members can become like zombies, just go-

ing through the motions of their daily routine with no sense of purpose," St. Martin said. "Varying events in your day or trying new things can pierce that complacency, making extended time at sea more enjoyable and productive."

"The effects of stress can compound the Groundhog Day effect," St. Martin continued. "They may have issues they need to talk to a chaplain about, but aren't ready to approach one of us yet."

St. Martin has run into problems with service members who are embarrassed to talk to a chaplain. He added that they may feel it is socially unacceptable or that people will call them crazy for waiting outside of the chaplain's office.

"Morning coffee is a good way to break the ice," St. Martin said. "People feel like they're just going down to have a cup of coffee and, in the process, maybe they strike up a conversation with me and we help that Sailor or Marine with their issues."

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/AW/FMF) Jeremy Gibson, from Decatur, Tenn., said that complacent attitudes lead to more preventable injuries sustained by Sailors and Marines than any other trigger. He said caffeine can play a role in helping to combat it, if used responsibly.

"Coffee can give you an extra boost in the morning and the caffeine rush can aid in brushing off complacency, if the energy is pushed in the right direction," agreed Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Tillard from Virginia Beach, Va. "Stay away from the cream and sugar and one or two cups of coffee in the morning can be beneficial."

St. Martin expressed his gratitude to Holy Joe's Cafe for donating the coffee and the crew for turning out in large numbers to drink the coffee.

Holy Joe's Cafe is an organization ran by the United Church of Christ military chaplains based out of Middlefield, Conn., which accepts donations of coffee to send to deployed service members. St. Martin said organizations like these help chaplains provide a place where people can come and discuss their issues in a safe environment. He believes these organizations are successful because chaplains serving their country around the world believe in the philosophy that the cure can be found in the coffee.

Nassau Trains Future Petty Officers

Story by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson
USS Nassau Public Affairs



New 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Class Petty Officers stand in formation during a frocking ceremony on USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Flight deck. Nassau frocked 83 Sailors during the ceremony.
Photo by MC2 Patrick Gordon

After learning the results of the advancement exam, Sailors aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) worked to make the transition from seaman, airman and fireman to Petty Officer 3rd Class.

The new petty officers first had to complete the Petty Officer Selectee Leadership Course before sewing on their new rating badges.

Class supervisor Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) April Cooper, from Eastpointe, Mich., said she looked forward to teaching the course for the first time.

"I was excited about it because learning the proper tools for leadership early on is essential for developing mature and efficient Sailors," said Cooper. "The fact that I could have a part in it is what really motivated me to make the program as beneficial as possible for every Sailor."

Prospective petty officers learned about aspects of leadership such as courage, communication, accountability, and innovation during the five day course.

Gunner's Mate Third Class Gregory Katz, from Jacksonville, Fla., said the class was very beneficial to his future as a petty officer.

"The first day, the instructors threw all sorts of knowledge at us," said Katz. "We learned about leadership and how the core values apply to being an effective petty officer. I was extremely impressed with the material provided."

Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class (AW/SW) Ryan Thorpe, one of the class instructors, said putting on the first crow and chevron is important because it allows Sailors to grow and become leaders.

"To me, it's the mark of a new beginning or a fresh start," said the Ortonville, Mich. native. "From E-1 to E-3 you are learning how to lead by following examples, training, and even learning some tough lessons. I believe that when one becomes a petty officer you are able to utilize the skills you've learned and, in turn, pass it along to other Sailors."

Even though becoming a leader doesn't happen overnight and it takes hard work, it also has its rewards, said Cooper.

"I think everyone who advanced has unlimited potential for success," said Cooper. "It all depends on whether or not they use the tools and advice we gave them."

Coming Home! Return and Reunion

Story by Chaplain Victoria Chappell, LT, CHC
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Congratulations! We are almost to the finish line; in August we return home to reunite with family and friends after an arduous deployment. Everyone made sacrifices, whether on the ship or the home front. Now it's time to finish strong—to learn about the dynamics of return and reunion, what to expect, anticipate, and manage the transition home successfully.

Separation due to military service is hard on everyone whether this is your first or sixth deployment. Managing the transition from deployment to home is critical for maintaining healthy relationships.

During our transit across the Atlantic representatives from the Fleet and Family Service Center will provide return and reunion classes on NASSAU. Chaplains are available to help; please contact us for assistance. Here are our top reunion tips:

For all reuniting:

- ☐ Realize that homecoming day, while great, will be stressful.
- ☐ Not everyone is coming home to a good situation. Have you prepared? Talk to chaplains, mentors, and counselors beforehand.
- ☐ Resist the temptation to go on a spending spree to celebrate the reunion.

For Couples:

- ☐ Take time to get used to each other again. Reestablishing intimacy might take time, so be patient.
- ☐ Communicate! Tell each other how you feel and listen to each other.
- ☐ Don't break out a list of things broken or start fighting over unresolved issues- wait until the time is right to discuss problems.
- ☐ Realize that your roles in the family will need to be renegotiated; be gentle, kind, and considerate as you move forward together.
- ☐ Reassure your spouse that his or her hard work maintaining the home front was equally as important as the your job at sea.
- ☐ Be careful not to get caught in the "Who Had It Worse" game.
- ☐ Everyone has physical and emotional needs. Ensure you are sensitive to others and not selfish expecting only your needs to be met first. Healthy relationships are mutually satisfying.

For Singles:

- ☐ Make plans now for a realistic homecoming. If your friends or family cannot be there, make plans with your buddies from the command.
- ☐ Set up your living situation as soon as possible. If you live with roommates, expect a period of readjustment.
- ☐ Determine your financial situation. You may have saved money during deployment. Don't blow it! If thinking about a purchase, take your time and get the best deal.
- ☐ Your parents and family have been very worried about you. Give them time and attention.

Concerning Children:

- ☐ Include the kids in homecoming plans. Ask for their ideas on things such as activities and decorating.
- ☐ Realize children react to change- they are not little adults. They may misbehave more to get the deploying parent's attention. They may be angry that you were gone for so long, they may shun you or cling to you. Be sensitive to their needs.
- ☐ Tell your children what is happening. This will give them time to think about the parent's return, begin to accept it, and get used to their feelings about the reunion to come.
- ☐ Be available whenever your children want to talk.
- ☐ Show patience when your children ask the same questions and you repeat the same answers.
- ☐ Treat all of your children's questions with respect and seriousness.

Remember...

- ☐ Go slowly – don't try to make up for lost time.
- ☐ Accept that others we left behind may be different- don't be negative or critical.
- ☐ Celebrate but do not overdo. Limit your use of alcohol. Remember alcohol was restricted during your deployment and your tolerance is lowered.
- ☐ Take time to get reacquainted. Be loving, kind, patient, and above all have fun.

Authority to Assume the Title and Wear the Uniform of a Petty Officer

First Class Petty Officers

SH1 Beck
EN1 Morrow
AO1 Reed
LS1 Vee

Second Class Petty Officers

EM2 Bosch CTT2 Kelso
AO2 Bowman MM2 Ledwith
PL2 Bekker PL2 Le
MM2 Borge IS2 Lora
ABF2 Callisto PL2 Lynch
ABH2 Casas AO2 Mendez
EM2 Dean BM2 Rogers
AO2 Gary OS2 Robinson
PL2 Gearheard IS2 Tecker
AC2 Goldstein DC2 Wiesner
ET2 Halberg LS2 Wamba
ET2 Johnson IS2 Zickelrose
MM2 Kopp HM2 Nica

Third Class Petty Officers

ABF3 Amala GM3 Katz
AO3 Austin AT13 Keoughan
AD3 Benoit BM3 Lippincott
OS3 Beck CS3 Maley
PL3 Bradley CS3 Maloney
LS3 Brooks MM3 Macey
LS3 Buckley AZ3 Mayo
AO3 Betso MM3 Naxjers
CTT3 Castellon AO3 Renbert
ABH3 Carnegie BM3 Sharma
LS3 Clark OS3 Stewart
PL3 Desideri OS3 Thomas
PL3 Dykstra BM3 Todd
OS3 Everett BM3 Valle
AG3 Fletcher OS3 Vargo
ABH3 Flores AO3 Vega
ABH3 Hollowell MC3 Williamson
LS3 Hardie PL3 Wong
AZ3 Helgeseth DC3 Wood
OS3 Innerigson OS3 Wright
ABF3 Johnson MM3 Wpner
AM3 Jonte PS3 Zella